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1 Mar 1968

The Warsaw Pact Ground Force Threat

I. Introduction (Mr. Clarke)

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II. Background [REDACTED]

A. The Problem

The problem stated broadly is, "What is the threat facing NATO?" This question is dominated by our view of the Warsaw Pact ground forces available to attack NATO's Central Region. Our view must consider the current posture of forces in the forward area, the status of units available for reinforcement, the nature of any additional mobilization base, and the problems inherent in the movement of large numbers of troops to the forward area.

B. The Traditional View

In recent years we have pictured the threat as composed of a fully equipped and poised Soviet force in the forward area backed by a large East European force available within a few days and another large Soviet force

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available from the USSR within a few weeks. This resulted in an initial force of some 630,000 troops which could be doubled in three to four weeks.

In NIE 11-14-66, the most recent full treatment of the problem, the buildup from the time of decision is described as achieving an 80 division force in the forward area within three to four weeks under non-combat conditions. Description of the total force in terms of divisions can be misleading since Soviet divisions are considerably smaller units than is generally implied in western usage. However, an understanding of the readiness and capability of the forces and their organization for combat can only be achieved by focusing on divisions and armies as such, the essential building blocks being an order of battle, a TO&E to use as a yardstick, and an insight into the actual strength of each relevant division and army. Beyond the army level there remains the question of the extent of support and Front level units.

Until recently our data base has consisted mainly of an order of battle derived from COMINT. To this skeleton, flesh was added based on Soviet desires as ex-

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pressed in documentary sources and our interpretation of their requirements. In a few instances, [REDACTED] provided additional significant information concerning specific units.

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[REDACTED] it has become possible for the first time to examine directly on a systematic basis the physical appearance of this COMINT derived OB.

Last summer, CIA undertook an intensive examination of the strategically located Belorussian Military District, both to develop a methodology for assessing equipment holdings of ground units and to test the validity of our previous estimates. In order to evaluate the confidence levels, as well as the uncertainties, inherent in our methodology it is necessary to understand the nature of this [REDACTED] data base. [REDACTED] the chief of the CIA branch responsible for [REDACTED] this area will describe the inputs and methodologies that were used.

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III. The Data Base

IV. The Analysis

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A. Belorussia

Using the data just described it is possible to assess with confidence the equipment holdings of the ground forces in Belorussia. Belorussia was selected because it is astride the direct ground route between Berlin and Moscow and contains perhaps the greatest concentration of ground forces within the USSR. We found that equipment holdings in Belorussia were on the order of half the then current estimates and that this shortage was primarily in wheeled vehicles. The study suggested that either our TE's were too high, the units were at a low level of readiness, or some combination thereof. In view of the strategic location of Belorussia, there was an additional implication that similar shortages existed elsewhere. These uncertainties were reflected in part in NIE 11-14-67 in which we raised doubts concerning the equipment levels of Soviet divisions.

B. The Joint Study on Reinforcement

Following a request from the Secretary of Defense in May 1967 for a joint CIA-DIA study of Soviet reinforce-

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ment capabilities, the two agencies proceeded with initial research.

The reinforcement problem is traditionally comprised of an assessment of the time required for mobilization movement, of the units forward, and assembly in the forward area. However, with the completion of NIE 11-14-67, in November 1967, it was apparent that a complete assessment of reinforcement would not be meaningful without some resolution of the major uncertainties which both CIA and DIA felt concerning the status of Soviet forces. Accordingly, the effort to assess this status was intensified and carried forward jointly as a necessary prerequisite to any study of the reinforcement process itself.

The initial report, published in January 1968, not only found that lower equipment levels existed in Belorussia but also that in at least one of the three armies in the Carpathian and one of the two armies in the Kiev Military Districts, equipment holdings were still lower. It appeared that the Belorussian forces were at a higher state of readiness than the others and probably constituted the principal immediate reinforcement force within the Soviet Union. It also was apparent that a major revision downward of previous

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TE's was required. This suggested some lowering of TO's as well.

Simultaneously the Joint Study group explored the TO&E question. There were enough instances where individual sub-units could be identified and [REDACTED] made, to permit a confident revision downward of the de facto TE for a motorized rifle division. The result was a decrease of about 20%. Similar work now in progress suggests that the tank division TE also will be reduced, probably by about 25%. These reductions imply some lowering of TO's as well and in the absence of direct evidence we reduced these by one and one-half men for each vehicle removed.

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Our analysis indicated that the Soviets would be able to assemble some 60 of these smaller Soviet and East European divisions in the forward area in about three weeks from the time of decision. This would result in a force of some 700,000 to 800,000 men as compared to the 1.2 million previously estimated to be available in three to four weeks. However, a substantial mobilization base would remain which would provide continued reinforcement capability for some months thereafter. It is important to remember, however, that both our previous and revised TO's are not

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the result of direct analysis as in the case of the TE's and will probably change as we develop the methodology to evaluate them more directly. It should be noted also that the changes we have described represent changes in our assessments and do not represent actual decreases on the part of the Soviets.

Perhaps of greater importance than the tentative new assessments are the doubts that have been raised concerning our previous estimates; not only of TO&E but actual manning and equipment levels of major units, the extent of their capacity for support and sustained operations, and their ability to achieve early massive reinforcement with present forces.

V. Present and Future Schedule

As noted in the initial report our principle future tasks include the following:

1. Completion of the equipment studies on the Carpathian, Baltic, Kiev, and Moscow Military Districts;
2. Re-evaluation of Soviet ground forces in East Germany and Poland;

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3. Assessment of Soviet manning levels and support capabilities; and

4. Evaluation of the status of East European forces.

As we continue our analysis, future changes are becoming apparent. For example, it now appears that one army in the Carpathian Military District which we had not yet covered in our initial report has a relatively high equipment level and may be part of the early reinforcement force.

Our immediate effort is focused on the determination of TE's and completion of our assessment of equipment levels in the remaining western Soviet military districts. Within the next 6 months we will have completed our analysis of these two questions and may have finished an assessment of GSFG equipment holdings.

In contrast to our well developed methodology for the determination of equipment holdings, evaluation of manning levels and TO's is beyond the present state of the analytic art.

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We hope to be able to do this within the next year. Meanwhile evaluation of East European equipment holdings and

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improved assessment of support capabilities will be carried forward. It will then become more meaningful to develop in detail the reinforcement process in terms of mobilization, movement, and assembly in the forward area.

To conclude, the new data permits us to assess equipment holdings with greater confidence, and to a lesser degree to achieve some functionalizing and identification of units and sub-units. From this we are developing revised TE's and deriving patterns of variation among line divisions. At this interim stage it appears that units are smaller and less balanced in their supporting elements than previously thought and that many will require substantial mobilization before they are combat ready. Final quantification of these changes is not yet possible but it is clear that some changes in our views will occur. It is also apparent that a major uncertainty exists as to the manning level of Warsaw Pact units and their ability to engage in sustained conflict. To close on a positive note, within the next year we expect to have a sounder understanding of the status of Pact ground forces than ever before and to be able to detect and evaluate future changes with a high degree of confidence.

VI. Conclusion (Mr. Clarke)